

FORBES LIBRARY LONG RANGE PLAN FY07 REVIEW

Forbes Library began implementing actions designated in our five year Long Range Plan this year. This plan was based on extensive information gathering about our community, much of it directly from our constituents. From the introduction, "The Long Range Planning Committee sought to place the Library in the context of social and economic changes in Northampton and to recommend appropriate changes in Library policies, especially in the areas of community outreach, public access, and collection development." In reviewing our progress, it is clear that the Library has embraced the objectives detailed in the plan and has worked diligently toward accomplishing them. The action plan is divided into five goals.

The first goal states, "All Library users will experience Forbes as welcoming, responsive, and satisfying." Objectives under this goal included improved communications, staff training, new service initiatives, and addressing building issues. We have made great progress in this area including:

- Applying for and receiving a \$10,000 LSTA customer service grant providing funds for a series of staff trainings, a new patron welcome brochure, and partial funding for a new "Welcome Center" which will include a building directory. Under this grant we have assessed staff development needs in this area and will be addressing these through our trainings. We are also going out in teams to visit area libraries to discover good ideas as well as to analyze our current practices. We are also planning cross-training of public service staff that will create more "seamless" access to library resources which is one of the key objectives of this goal. This grant will be completed in 2008.
- A Welcome Packet for all new staff was developed. It includes benefit information as well as a great wealth of information about the library and the community. It is a tool to orient new staff to the library. This is augmented with a tour of the building and a review of the library's policy manual.
- An annual employee Performance Review process was developed and implemented. This process encourages candid conversation between employee and supervisor and goal setting.
- The Information Services Team was formed in the fall of 2006 with three coordinators, two of whom were new hires for the team. Cross training has been completed and all employees in Information Services can cover all areas of what used to be the Reference and Arts & Music Departments.
- The Trustees of Forbes Library formed a sub committee to oversee building maintenance concerns. The committee consists of two trustees, the director, the assistant director, the facilities manager, and the library technician. The committee will meet annually.
- The Special Collections climate control was made more reliable and consistent.
- The director maintains regular communication with the Parking Superintendent to solve various parking issues as they arise. The library has instituted the policy to give patrons money for parking meters if requested.

- A committee of young adults was formed to discuss library services in general. They meet quarterly during the school year.
- A computer was installed on the mezzanine so that patrons can search the online catalog from that level.
- Exterior book drops were installed making the job of returning materials much easier for patrons.

The second goal states, “The needs and interests to the community will guide the development and improvement of library services.” Objectives under this goal included responding to requests gathered from our community survey, focus groups, and outreach efforts. Budget constraints have limited enacting some responses, most notably additional hours. Despite this, we have made great progress in this area including:

- In an effort to make library hours more consistent, the library’s schedule has been modified to make them more uniform so they are easier to remember.
- Renovation of the Friends of Forbes Community Room was completed in 2007 and is now heavily used for library programs and community groups.
- The library now owns and circulates a large collection of Playaways, which are MP3 players preloaded with audio books.
- Information Services has presented seven free training workshops on the following topics: genealogy, the online catalog, email, Google, Evaluating Websites, the library’s website, and an online database called Infotrak.
- The library has increased the number of audio books and movies although this is an area that could use even more funding.
- One charge from the plan was to increase our outreach to the community. Staff in all departments have worked very hard to do this. Some of our connections include visiting with the Northampton High School librarian, the Center for New Americans, joining the Friends of the Homeless Shelter, many school and teacher group tours, serving on the On the Same Page community reading committee, the Smith College Community Advisory Board, working with the Northampton Arts Council to produce a juried exhibit, working with the NHS photography students to produce an exhibit, serving on the Intellectual Inquiry committee at Smith College, an increasing publicity about library programming to include the newly-created Western Massachusetts Arts Calendar, the city’s website, and the school newsletters.
- We have added an online form for patrons to suggest acquisitions and have worked to make patrons more aware that we welcome suggestions. Use of this service has increased significantly.
- We have been updating our print and online resources based on demand by students.
- We have installed two new computers in the Children’s Department.
- An adult literacy collection was developed in consultation with the Pioneer Valley Adult Learning center in Northampton.
- The library has a representative on the new Senior Center library committee. The library has donated materials for this collection.

- The library has posted Lilly's hours and a link to their website on our website. We have sent bookmarks with our hours to Lilly Library. We have also invited Lilly staff to participate in our staff trainings.
- The library clarified the food and drink policy to allow patrons to have covered beverages and neat snack food in the library.
- The library has increased the number of adult and children's Spanish language materials in the collection. Displays highlighting these collections have been mounted.

Our third goal states, "The Community's awareness of library services and resources will be strengthened." This became a crucial goal for the long range planning committee because much of what people suggested that the library offer were things that we already had. A budget line item was requested for publicity in our FY08 budget, but was denied by the city which was mandating no new initiatives. Despite this, we have made efforts to increase our marketing which include:

- The director has lauched a blog that is linked from the library's homepage and is updating it weekly.
- A brochure titled, "Castle on the Hill" was developed describing the library's architecture. It was distributed to the community including to the Chamber of Commerce.
- A "Did you know?" feature was added to the library's website with monthly updates to inform patrons about library services in a quick and easy to read format. "Did you know?" is also being distributed in print format at the circulation desk.
- The library has steadily expanded the number of email subscribers to our events mailing lists and has added a list for young adult programs.
- A procedure for staff to submit press releases to the Patron Services Librarian was developed and staff were instructed and encouraged to do so. This information was also included in the welcome packet for new employees.

Goal IV states, "The Board of Trustees of the Forbes Library will ensure the long term financial security and address immediate financial needs of the library." The Trustees have been developing an annual fund which is scheduled to begin early in 2008. The Trustees formed a subcommittee to assess the library's financial investments.

Goal V states, "The Board of Trustees of Forbes Library will update its governance structure to more effectively fulfill the mission of the library." The board is in the process of beginning this process which will include provisions for efficiently filling vacancies and possibly adding two additional trustees to the board.

The library is half-way through progress of our FY08 long range plan goals which will be reported on at the end of next year. In addition, a FY09 action update was submitted to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in November.